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GENERAL CATROUX
AND THE FRENCH COLONIAL EMPIRE

Description

A study of the origin, growth, and decline of a tradition as reflected in the career of a soldier-diplomat.

3 March 1944

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Summary

General Georges Catroux, Number 1 trouble-shooter for General de Gaulle and the French Committee of National Liberation, has had a distinguished career as a soldier, diplomat, and colonial administrator. His versatility, personal reserve, and inscrutability, and his noncommittal position as an independent moderate in North African politics have made him an unknown quantity behind the Algiers scene. These same qualities have permitted him to play an important role as mediator in French colonial disputes and current political affairs.

Catroux' career falls naturally into four periods: colonial experience through the fall of France, his part in the joint Anglo-French administration of Syria and Lebanon, a diplomatic interlude during the formation of the FCNL, and his role in the recent activities of that organization.

His early training was exclusively military and colonial. During this period, particularly in Indo-China, he proved more able and successful as an administrator than as a soldier. At the same time his firm stand as a patriot and imperialist in the Lyautey tradition indicated the historical and personal influences of his formative years had conditioned his outlook and shaped his philosophy of Empire.

The importance of his work in the formation of the French Committee of National Liberation cannot be exaggerated. As diplomatic mediator for de Gaulle and as agent in the negotiation of a temporary working agreement between the rival leaders of French resistance, Catroux was largely responsible for implementing French unity and understanding with the Allies. In his insistence on the complete elimination of Vichy collaborators from administrative and army posts in North Africa, Catroux has adamantly refused to accept a compromise dictated by expediency.

His recent role as colonial ambassador at large for the FCNL resulted in a successful mediation of the Lebanese crisis which permitted him to salvage French prestige despite the loss of French power. His influence on the FCNL has declined inversely with the growing complexity of North African politics. Moreover, his usefulness as a skilled diplomat has been seriously curtailed by his firm adherence to the military traditionalism and imperialism of a pre-war era.

GENERAL CATROUX
AND THE FRENCH COLONIAL EMPIRE

I. BACKGROUND[1]

In 1879, Georges Albert Catroux was born into a prominent military family of the Third Republic. His father was a general in the French Army.

His formal education followed the conventional pattern for the son of an Army officer who wished to follow in his father's footsteps. After preparing at the military school of La Flèche, Catroux at an early age entered St. Cyr from which he was graduated in 1899. As soon as he was commissioned, he was sent to North Africa with the famous mounted company of the Foreign Legion.

Except for an interlude of two years from 1903 to 1905, when he was assigned to the staff of the Governor General of Indo-China, Catroux continued until the outbreak of World War I to serve in North Africa, first in Morocco as an aid to Colonel Lyautey and General d'Amade and later, from 1911 to 1914, in Algeria as aide-de-camp to Governor General Lutaud.

In North Africa, he not only received invaluable training under some of France's most able colonial administrators and thoroughly familiarized himself with the local territory village by village but he also became completely indoctrinated in the traditional spirit of French imperialism.

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[1] The purely biographical information of this section is based on *PW Weekly*, 16 April 1943; *Current Biography*, May 1943, pp. 12-15; *Newsweek*, 5 April, 7 June 1943; *Time*, 19 April 1943; *Dictionnaire National des Contemporains*; *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 February 1943; *International Who's Who*; Phillipe Barès, *Charles de Gaulle*, pp. 185-188; Raoul Aglion, *The Fighting French*; Eve Curie, *Journey among Warriors*; Eve Curie, "Le Général Catroux" in *Pour la Victoire*, 24 June 1943; *Le Messager* (New York), 15 May 1941; Emil Lengyel in "This Week," The *New York Herald Tribune*, 1 August 1943; *Courrier du Pacifique*, 19 February 1942.

This amorphous tradition grew out of the achievements of certain colonial officials and a large corpus of theoretical writings about the organization of the Empire, which a long succession of ministries interpreted variously to suit shifting political circumstances. Catroux, whose career developed concurrently with the expansion of the Empire and the evolution of a colonial policy, was profoundly influenced by these men and their ideas. One concept and one personality in particular determined his views -- the concept of "assimilation" and the personality of Marshal Lyautey, great French Empire builder. It is therefore necessary to consider the historical milieu in which Catroux found himself during his formative years.

The turn of the century was an unusually crucial and active period in the history of French colonial expansion.[1] There reigned throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century a spirit of anti-colonialism which had sprung from a distrust of the costly ventures of the Second Empire and from a primary devotion to the task of recovering the lost Rhine provinces. This inveterate insularity presented a constant obstacle to the imperialistic aspirations of Jules Ferry, vehement exponent of colonization as a means of providing markets for France's rapidly expanding industries. Around 1890 the beginning of a new, constructive interest

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1. Based on Roberts, Stephen H., History of French Colonial Policy, (1870-1925), London, 1929; Priestley, Herbert I., France Overseas, New York, 1938; Lyautey, Pierre, L'Empire Colonial Français, Paris, 1931; Ponton, G. L., "Les Empires Coloniaux et leur Avenir," Les Cahiers Français, No. 44; The New York Times, 21 June 1941.

in colonial questions and a gradual, if reluctant, shift in policy on the part of the metropolitan ministries became apparent.

The new period was largely one of military expeditions in Equatorial and West Africa, in Madagascar, and in Upper Tonkin designed to fill the growing demand for new markets and to distract dissatisfied elements at home.

As the Army pushed deeper and deeper into new territory, the colonies became a school of military training, where up-and-coming leaders like Galliéni and Lyautey could achieve fame, and young army officers like Catroux could serve under their tutelage.

If the ministers in Paris were interested primarily in victories and the glory brought to France, the realistic military officials who examined the colonial problem at closer hand did not neglect the economic theories of Ferry. It was in the colonies and not at Paris that new administrative ideas evolved as the result of observation and experiment.

As a member of the staff of Colonel Lyautey, Catroux participated in the campaign on the border dividing Algeria and Morocco that led to the eventual pacification of Morocco.[1] Lyautey at this point had only begun to establish his wide reputation as France's greatest colonizer. But his ideas had already crystallized and he put them to successful trial in Tonkin and Algeria. From his experiences in these colonies, Lyautey developed a theory of colonization which Catroux and other disciples were to practice in later colonial ventures.

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[1] The total subjugation of Morocco was not concluded until the 1930's. The "pacification" of a country, as Lyautey conceived it, was a gradual process of economic assimilation, achieved over an extended period of time.

Lyautey's program of pacification was based on the basic assumptions that political settlement should proceed simultaneously with military action and that there should be a progressive organization of the colony based on the ordinary economic life of the people under pacification. "Civil action and military action," he wrote, "should proceed with the same alert and certain step."[1]

The army therefore was regarded as an instrument of organization rather than conquest, an important consideration which may have permanently shaped the outlook of a political soldier such as Catroux. Although civil measures were introduced almost at once upon conquest, colonial administration at this time continued in the hands of the Army. Civil officials have since taken over the control of affairs in most parts of the Empire, but the Army remains a powerful influence. The chief administrators are often high-ranking army officers.

Lyautey's policy aimed not at the subjugation of the natives or even tolerant patronage, but at a complete rapprochement based on close cooperation. Lyautey's "moving wall of occupation" envisaged a mutually advantageous economic organization leaving undisturbed the social and political life of the natives. It required time, great patience, and mutual effort.

To accomplish economic penetration, Lyautey, practical man of action as well as theorist, revived the idea of "markets." If these nerve-centers and economic strategic points were occupied by advance columns, he argued, the domination of the rest of the country by mobile columns would necessarily follow.

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[1] Roberts, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 560.

"This is the basis of all my doctrines of colonial warfare," Lyautey concluded, "...the negation of violent action from the start: it is that which results in the maximum economy of effort and risk of human lives, and that which leaves behind it the least damage when it is time for construction...construction, which is the one aim of every colonial war."[1]

There was nothing essentially original about these ideas. Lyautey's distinction lay in the success with which he converted theory into practice and inculcated a new school of colonial administrators with his methods. In the final analysis it was not the theory itself which counted but the personality of the man who applied it.

The Moroccan campaign of General Catroux in 1934 is an excellent example of this. After attending the Paris "School for Marshals" in 1929 he had been promoted to brigadier general and given the difficult command of the Marrakesh district in Morocco.

In 1934, together with General Giraud, Catroux began the final reduction of the mountainous Djebel Saho district. Officers for native affairs, corresponding to Lyautey's "Intelligence Officers," preceded the attack. They mingled with the tribes and prepared them for pacification.

Columns of troops followed, avoiding fighting when possible. Once the natives had capitulated Catroux won their favor by buying native goods, setting up medical centers and introducing sanitary facilities. Roads were built in the wake of the advancing army by the Foreign Legion. Thus the entire region was occupied at the cost of only three French casualties and very few natives killed.

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[1] Roberts, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 561.

On the other hand, Lyautey's methods, relying as they did upon effective combination of "big stick" tactics and skillful tempering of force with concession, were best suited for use in the initial stages of occupation. They presuppose a certain naivete or indifference in political matters on the part of the pacified people and a readiness to be impressed by an outward show of force.

French colonizers therefore have been more successful in handling local peoples of relatively undeveloped regions, such as North Africa, than those of more advanced regions like the Levant. The French have frequently fallen into the error of resorting to the direct and forcible methods of Lyautey in complex political situations when they should not be applied. Witness the recent crisis in Lebanon where unwarranted use of these methods was made. The skillful hand of Catroux was required to untangle this snarl,

By 1906 the expansionist period had spent itself in excessive military activity. A period of reaction followed. It was now thought necessary to consolidate the gains already made. Consequently it was felt that the newly acquired areas should be politically and economically stabilized by annexation. But France lacked a universally feasible plan of consolidation. Instead she had only an impracticable theory, that of assimilation.

Because of a natural attribute for territorial expansion and a penchant for bureaucratic centralization, the French imperialists thought only in terms of extending France proper beyond its continental boundaries or of assimilating the newly acquired territories into the framework of metropolitan France. The phrase, La France d'outremer, conveys this notion of "une nation française élargie." Consequently, the colonial territories were regarded as permanently subordinate to the mother country and no consideration was given them as separate entities progressing toward political independence.

Failure of the French to shape a uniform colonial policy during the period directly preceding the World War can be attributed to three factors; one, traditional opposition of the Republic to further imperial enterprise; two, fluctuating political conditions; and finally, application of abstract and inflexible principles based upon the romantic ideals of Rousseau and the rationalistic ideas of the Encyclopedists to concrete conditions beyond their scope.

An ill-defined concept of a colonial system grew out of the fundamental doctrines of human universality and perfectibility espoused by these misguided visionaries. The aim of French explorers, missionaries, and colonizers had long been a curious combination of idealistic benevolence and materialistic exploitation. Variations in colonial policy have resulted only from changes in emphasis, whereas the ultimate objective of converting natives to French citizens and the colonies to French départements remained constant.

When at the end of the nineteenth century, the Colonial Powers, of which France stood second only to Britain, abandoned their notion of conquest by divine right and their frankly mercantilistic program for the more ethical concept of benevolent trusteeship, France for a time clung tenaciously to its faith in assimilation.

By 1905, however, the failure of political assimilation was manifest, except in Northern Algeria, comprising three départements, and the "old colonies,"[1] where it enjoyed a limited success and recognition. There was no alternative immediately available and the French ministries, suffering from profound disillusionment, once again reverted to an anti-colonial policy. In time, however, a new tendency toward administrative decentralization and political association, such as characterizes the British Empire, appeared and new formulas emerged.

In Algeria, financial delegations, constituting popularly elected representative assemblies, were established. These councils had consultative functions but no general legislative powers. At the same time, the powers of the Governor General were increased so that administrative activity was centered in the colony.

In Morocco, Marshal Lyautey, aware that the Moslems, Jews, and Berbers could never be assimilated as French citizens, introduced in 1912 a practicable form of the protectorate,[2] which he described "not as a theoretical formula or a phase of transition, but as a lasting reality: -- as the economic and moral penetration of a people, not by subjection to our force or even to our liberties, but by a close association, in which we administer them in peace by their own organs of government and according to their own customs and laws."[3]

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[1] The "old colonies" which elect members to Parliament include the Antilles, Senegal, Guiana, Réunion, Cochin-China, and the possessions in India.

[2] The protectorate formula had been first employed in Tunisia thirty years previous to its introduction in Morocco. Without Lyautey's energetic and intelligent direction, it developed more slowly than in the later acquisition.

[3] Roberts, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 566-67.

In his interpretation of the protectorate as an irrevocable political status, Lyautey closely approximated the practical politics of the British system. His sincere and candid admiration for British organization found expression in a summary of its merits: "English power, -- unity of plan, -- continuity of design, -- governmental stability, -- inflexible method, -- immediate execution, -- a practical sense, tenacity, and an essentially elastic adaptation to the country and climate -- and, in a word, all that we have not."[1] Under Lyautey's direction, these essentials of order and progress were to a large degree introduced in Morocco. As a result, the occupation of this territory became one of the more successful French colonial ventures.

In adapting the practical machinery of the British system to his own immediate needs, Lyautey overlooked its evolutionary aim. He anticipated a material and physical growth for the colony but did not envisage a concomitant political development outside the framework of metropolitan France. In this, he fixed the pattern for future colonial policy of France. There is in the French philosophy of the Empire no inclusion of a commonwealth of free but federated nations. The overseas territories, vaguely classified as colonies, protectorates, and mandates, have become regarded as separate units, and are administered as such, but they continue to exist on a political level below that of the _métropole_.

Nevertheless, Lyautey's introduction of the protectorate represented a radical departure from the traditional course of French expansion and indicated a submission to historical pressure in the interest of expediency. In later decades, France has sought a compromise in the direction of greater flexibility. The exact nature of the compromise, however, is not yet clear.

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[1] Roberts, _op. cit._, Vol. II, p. 558.

As late as 1939, General Catroux, a disciple of Lyautey and exponent of French imperialism, espoused the old-school view that persists among ardent colonists and militarists.[1] For Catroux the term of Empire excluded any distinction between the mother country and its domain beyond the seas, implying rather "the totality of the French community...a community which is ruled by France, metropolitan director whence emanates sovereign action and which administers to imperial interests."

This subordination of colonies to the metropolis and its requirements recalls the traditional conception of the Empire as a vast wheel with the colonies existing around the outer periphery of the rim and connected to the hub of metropolitan France by imaginary spokes. A deviation, however, embodying the idea of a looser federation, now appears. In Catroux' thesis, these spokes are no longer defined as administrative channels but as "moral and material forces of the community for the profit and under the impulsion of its major element and director."

Thus the various fragments of the imperial whole are united by "a common spirit, common interests, and a common economy." The Empire becomes a definite kind of community, "community of ideas and a community of interests," a concept which is fundamentally British. Complete political assimilation is sacrificed to economic and spiritual assimilation.

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[1] "Sur l'idée d'Empire," Sciences Politiques, June 1939.

Practical expression is found in a colonial policy of "compensation" or compromise, which Catroux has employed with notable success.

The primary importance of the Empire, Catroux stresses, lies in its value as a source of strength and hidden reserves in national emergency. Here too is an expedient consideration that is essentially Anglo-Saxon. In such a crisis, the mother country can only have "recourse to the Empire," integrated by the dynamic concentration of its moral and material forces. But powerful forces oppose this cohesion: the wide dispersion of component parts of the imperial community; the diversity of races, religions, and customs; the varying degrees of evolution which their civilizations have achieved; administrations and political regimes; and frequently instinctive repugnances existing alone or combined with nationalist aspirations. There are similar obstacles to economic imperialism: indigenous customs and methods of exchange; protection by the metropolis of domestic industry or agrarian interests; and finally the unequal flow of exchange.

Although these theories were based upon a lifetime of varied experience and close observation as well as an exhaustive study of colonial problems, Catroux must have envisaged at an early point the part that the Empire was to play in the future of France. Throughout his career, he often relied upon the methods of Lyautey. As the situations have become more complex and the peoples involved more sophisticated, Catroux has been correspondingly more subtle and diplomatic. Yet, Catroux represents not so much an advance on the ideas of Lyautey as a natural and logical extension of them.

Early in 1939 he was given command of the 19th Army Corps in Algiers. He occupied this post for only a short time. With the approach of war he became highly critical of the conservative General Staff, and specifically of Marshal Pétain, General Weygand, and General Gamelin.

Although not so outspoken in his recommendations as General de Gaulle, Catroux stood with him among a minority of French generals who urged a complete change in the personnel of the General Staff and the adoption of a new strategic plan to dispel the Maginot Line complacency.[1] A few months before the war he was relieved of his command by General Gamelin and placed on the retired list.

In August 1939 he was recalled to service by Georges Mandel, then acting Minister for Colonies, and sent in October to Indo-China as Acting Governor General.[2] At the same time he was made a five star general, so that he now surpasses Giraud in seniority and de Gaulle in rank. Later, having taken up arms in violation of the Vichy armistice agreement, Catroux, already deprived of his citizenship along with de Gaulle, Legentilhomme, and others,[3] was tried by a military court martial of France on 11 April 1941 and condemned to death _in absentia_.[4]

Catroux' occasional ventures in the field of military operations have been marked by success but have seldom been prolonged. His purely military record is commendable but not brilliant. However his experience in desert warfare enabled him in London to analyze North African communication

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1. Egon Kaskeline, The _Christian Science Monitor_, 9 February 1943.
2. For details of Catroux' career see APPENDIX— a chronological table of principal positions held.
3. _La Petite Gironde_, 11 December 1940.
4. _Informations Générales_, No. 33, 15 April 1941.

problems and to make a number of excellent recommendations.[1] But it is as an administrator and diplomat that he has made his largest contribution to the colonial history of France.

II. CATROUX, THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATOR

Until his appointment as Acting High Commissioner of Indo-China, Catroux occupied only minor official positions in Indo-China, North Africa, and the Near East. After his return to France following the Armistice, he was appointed military attaché in Constantinople. Later he was transferred to Beirut and became Governor of Damascus, retaining the post under General Weygand during the Druze campaign. Although these posts were relatively unimportant, they did afford him an opportunity to acquaint himself with French territories and colonial policy.

Upon arriving in Indo-China Catroux immediately set himself to the task of preparing the colony against possible aggression.[2] He instituted a plan of general mobilization and organization of the country's resources. At the same time, he did not neglect internal affairs or questions of foreign policy but oriented both to the larger program of defense. Following the precepts of Lyautey, he cooperated closely with local potentates and urged the native Annamites and Cambodians to take part in the war effort. Civilians indispensable to the country's economic life were not conscripted but retained in essential occupations. Workers' unions were organized in addition to combatant units and directed toward accelerating and expanding production. Native produce was then exchanged for American planes and matériel.

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[1] See "Le Général Catroux à Londres" (an interview), Les Documents, No. 33, 1 January 1943.

[2] This information is based on articles in France-Amérique, 15 August 1943; The Washington Post, 26 March 1943.

As Governor General, Catroux commenced or revived public works projects relating directly to the war in the Pacific. He also zealously undertook to improve the means of communication and transportation. Many thousands of workers were employed throughout the country to construct a new highway to supplement the only other road joining north and south Indo-China. Although France was a turntable in the world air network, the airlines connecting Indo-China with Europe and the Far East had been operating only a few years. Catroux, who was conscious of the importance of air transport in modern warfare,[1] did not succeed in persuading French interests to increase facilities for air traffic.

Catroux persuaded the French home government to extend him certain arbitrary powers in the matter of tariff duties. After imports from France fell off and the country's supplies became depleted, he used these powers profitably to obtain raw materials or manufactured products from neighboring countries and the allies.

Although he never relaxed his efforts to strengthen the defenses of the colony, he worked under overwhelming handicaps. Innumerable obstacles appeared. In spite of his incessant appeals to metropolitan France for assistance, the flow of war material dwindled to nothing. After French capitulation, he urged in vain that ships and planes at Martinique be sent to Indo-China to continue the war.

He cooperated closely with the British and revived the decisions taken in common at the French-Anglo Conference held at Singapore in June 1939. The British were never able to send effective reinforcements, but they continued to encourage Catroux and to facilitate his task. Only a small amount of American goods reached the colony and a military mission Catroux had sent to the United States returned empty-handed.

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[1] Les Documents, No. 33, op. cit., p. 4.

Comparable to the neglect of the metropolitan government was the complacence of the colonists themselves. While business was prosperous and the exports under Catroux' stimulation became more numerous than ever, the planters and commercialists were lulled into a false sense of security. Later, when the debacle was imminent, they shared the defeatism of the high functionaries. Accompanying their head-in-the-sand indifference was the active cooperation of the Bank of Indo-China with Japanese financial interests. As this Bank furnished the corresponding Japanese institution with all its information on the economic and financial organization of Indo-China, the Japanese banks, unlike the British and Chinese, never found it necessary to establish branch offices in the French colony.

In the face of such handicaps and in spite of unfavorable odds, Catroux strove after the surrender of France to keep Indo-China in the war in conformity to agreements with the Allies. When in June 1940 the first Japanese military mission arrived in Hanoi, Catroux disregarded the order of the Bordeaux government to cease resistance. Thus, apart from the Chad administrator, Félix Eboué, he was the only major colonial governor who refused to accept capitulation.

Instead, he appealed to all Frenchmen "to prepare your fighting spirit for the day...when you will rise to overwhelm your temporary masters." If Catroux had been supported by his own adjutants, notably Admiral Decoux, he might have been able to hold out for some time.

The day after Catroux proudly declared, "As long as the defense of Indo-China is entrusted to me, I shall not strike my colors," he was relieved of his post by the Vichy Minister for Colonies and replaced by Decoux. He was able to escape to Singapore and in August joined the Free French forces. A brief and unsuccessful insurrection in French Indo-China late in the same month was attributed by the Colonial Ministry to the example of French Equatorial Africa and to the leadership of Catroux. In September 1940 a British seaplane carried both him and Mme. Catroux to London. Here he placed himself at the disposal of his junior officer, General de Gaulle.

Labelled a traitor and opportunist by less courageous Vichyites, Catroux was accused of sacrificing honor, loyalty, and his compatriots to further his own ambitions and to gratify his spite.[1] It was far from true. In June 1939, shortly before his departure for Indo-China and just one year before the dishonorable demise of the French nation, Catroux had recalled the role of the Empire in prophetic words:

> "To a people humiliated in its pride and deprived of the fruits of its sacrifices and victory, to a people conscious of the grave and pressing dangers which menaced its existence and patrimony, its colonial domain seemed a safeguarding force, an attestation to the genius of the race worthy of inspiring pride and confidence, and a reservoir of material and moral power sufficiently rich so that the country was, if it knew how to exploit its resources, sure of its destiny."[2]

In Indo-China, with admirable independence, resourcefulness, and foresight, he had endeavored in vain to put his concept to practice. Betrayed here, he turned to the only organized movement of resistance at the time.

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[1] This Vichy line is most notably taken by Jean Demase in *Ici, Paris*, Paris, 1942, pp. 11-19.

[2] "Sur l'idee d'Empire," *op. cit.*

III. CATROUX IN THE LEVANT

The adherence of a man with General Catroux' military standing and prestige to the Free French movement contributed immeasurably to strengthen its cause. Other French officers were encouraged by his example to defy Pétain and join General de Gaulle's troops. Catroux became a member of the Council of Defense of the French Empire and assumed a position of increasing importance in the Free French movement. Although from the outset an ardent member of the de Gaullist crusade acting in innumerable capacities as its official representative, his allegiance belongs to republican France, not to a particular individual or party. Because he has dedicated himself to the greater mission of liberated France, he has not hesitated on occasion to act independently of de Gaulle when he felt French interests required it.

In December 1940, Catroux received his first assignment under de Gaulle. He was appointed Free French Delegate General in the Levant and commander-in-chief of all the Free French forces in that area. The Near and Middle East had become a vitally strategic area. Through this gateway the Axis planned to encircle the Mediterranean and, after the entrance of Japan into the war, to join the East and West in a vast pincers movement that would crush the British Empire in Africa and Asia and at the same time isolate Russia. In June 1939, the Daladier Government in France had ceded the frontier territory of Alexandretta to Turkey in order to win Turkey over to the "peace front" against Germany and thereby block Hitler's path to the East. Since the Syrians were alienated by this complete disregard for their claims, the French to a certain extent defeated their own ends.

To prepare the way, the Germans after signing the armistice with France on 25 June 1940, began a vigorous campaign to win concessions in the Levant from the Vichy Government and at the same time to undermine French prestige in the area. The country was infiltrated by a Fifth Column of archaeologists and tourists, directed after January 1941 by the German Minister to the Near East, Von Hentig. An Italian armistice commission was sent to cloak German aspirations, but its patent efforts were unsuccessful. Although Marshal Pétain had assured all powers the integrity of the French colonies would be maintained, Vichy announced in April 1941 its intention of relinquishing the French mandated areas, presumably abandoning them to German seizure.[1]

Early in May, Admiral Darlan entered into negotiations with the Germans and granted them use of French air bases in Syria. German planes, en route to aid the Iraqi rebels, began to land in Syria on 11 May. Alarmed by such evidence of German penetration, London protested. The British refused to accept the assurances of General Dentz, Vichy High Commissioner, that the Germans were entitled to use Syrian airdromes by virtue of the Armistice but that there were no German soldiers in the Levant.[2]

Meanwhile, conditions in Syria and Lebanon turned from bad to worse. Economic distress prevailed as the British blockade, extended to the French Empire as a consequence of Vichy's policy of collaboration, was tightened around the Levant. The food shortage, Vichy's apparent dereliction, and Von Hentig's subtle propaganda combined

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1. *Entente au Levant*, The Franco-British Publishing Company, London, 1942, p. 31.
2. *Ibid*.

to provoke a new series of disturbances. Strikes, student demonstrations, and riots grew in frequency and violence. Early in 1941, the Vichy regime in a conciliatory gesture was obliged to restore to the Levant a measure of internal self-government. It introduced a Chief of State and Cabinet modeled on the Pétain pattern and proclaimed new constitutions along totalitarian lines[1] to supplant the constitutions which in September 1939 had been sacrificed to the exigencies of war.

In November 1940, Catroux began a series of broadcasts from Cairo, designed to counteract the trend toward collaboration in the Levant by urging the Syrians and Lebanese to break with Vichy. After German and Italian planes began to land in Syria, Catroux broadcast an appeal to the French to expel Axis forces. Planes were sent to drop leaflets over the country. It became evident to the French and British alike that propaganda and economic isolation alone would not check the German threat. Consequently, on 8 June 1941 Free French troops under General Catroux and the British Ninth Army under General Sir Henry Maitland-Wilson invaded Syria to expel the Vichy forces of General Henri Dentz. The successful campaign lasted a bare five weeks, and on Bastille day an armistice was concluded at Acre.

Although the occupation of Syria and Lebanon by Allied troops had averted a military catastrophe, these countries remained in grave economic and political straits. Catroux now found himself in the midst of a serious and complex situation involving relations with the British in the Near East as well as French colonial policy in the mandated areas.

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[1] R & A Report No. 1063, Near East, August 1943.

This three-sided contest constituted a new experience and a new test for him. A review of the methods he used in this critical situation will provide an estimate of his general usefulness and illuminate the obscure question of Anglo-French relations.

At the outset of hostilities in the Levant, the Free French and British issued a joint statement declaring their intention of granting independence to Syria and Lebanon as soon as practicable. Ostensibly their purpose in invading the Levant was to ensure military security, so they regarded this declaration as politically necessary to remove the appearance of aggression and invite native support.

If the joint occupation of the Levant involved certain larger political issues, the immediate problems facing them were defense and reconstruction. The respective functions of the British and French authorities in the territory during the transitional period were fixed by the de Gaulle-Lyttleton correspondence of 7 August 1941. The Free French were to supervise internal affairs and maintain order while the British were to provide external defense. Great Britain denied any interest in Syria and Lebanon beyond that of expediting total victory and conceded that, after these countries had achieved their complete independence, France was to have a position and influence in them over all other powers.[1]

In this initial agreement is found one source of later friction between the French and British in the Levant area. At the very first a continual dispute began over jurisdiction in political and economic affairs. The Anglo-French regime with its overlapping agencies and duplication of effort led only to confusion and conflict. Unnecessary competition for military stores produced disastrous inflation and speculation. It was clear almost at once that civil affairs could not be successfully divorced from military affairs but neither side was willing to relinquish or share its rights. The short period of combined military operations had been apparently a mere liaison de convenance, an interim in the traditional rivalry between the two principal colonial powers in the Near East.

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[1] Beirut Wire #142, 21 April 1942; The Near East, Problems and Prospects (Harris Lectures, University of Chicago), Chicago, 1942, Appendix, pp. 224-225.

This rivalry found expression in the open feud which quickly developed between General Catroux, de Gaulle's Delegate General Plenipotentiary and Commander in Chief of the Levant States, and Major General Spears, head of the political and economic mission which the British sent to Beirut.

Although the direction of all economic matters in the Levant had been assigned to the French, the problem of supplying the British forces in the Near East required the presence of a British economic agency. Moreover, practically all the shipping that filled both the military and civilian needs of the Near East was under Anglo-American control. In relieving the economic distress of the Levant States and orienting them to the exigencies of war, the French were completely dependent upon allocation of supplies by the British.[1]

The French resented the presence of the British mission and the highhanded methods of Spears. Spears irritated

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[1] R & A Report No. 1063, Near East, August 1943.

Catroux by overstepping his authority as head of the mission and invading the province of French jurisdiction in the internal administration of the country. When Catroux insisted upon his removal from this post, the British countered by appointing him Minister to the Levant and by incorporating the political branch of the Mission into the British Foreign Service. The direct control of the economic section was left in Spears' hands.[1] Catroux retaliated by creating independent French bureaus in opposition to those of the British and by blocking Spears' plans.

In Lebanon, where the newly appointed president sided with Catroux and the foreign minister looked to Spears, the Ministry was forced to resign in July 1942 owing to its inability to cope with the food shortage, which the division of economic control had not tended to allay. As a result the prestige of both countries among the natives declined, and the position of the nationalists was strengthened.

The depreciation in value of the currency presented another acute problem. With a scarcity of consumer goods and influx of French paper money preceding the invasion of the Free French and British, inflation had progressed unchecked. Catroux strove to return Syria and Lebanon to a stabilized franc bloc, but Spears, holding the economic purse strings, succeeded in introducing the pound sterling as the monetary standard.

The British objected most strongly to the retention by Catroux of a considerable number of anti-British ex-Vichyites in administrative positions. It was impossible for Catroux, however, to replace Vichy's civil servants with adequately trained officials who were less compromised by their backgrounds. In order to carry out necessary reforms as well as administer the internal affairs of the two countries, he was obliged to continue the incumbents in office. It has also been suggested that de Gaulle was recruiting converts.[1] The presence of these officials was resented not only by the British but by the Free French and local peoples as well.

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[1] R & A Report No. 1063, Near East, August 1943.

The dismissal of all officials with previous Vichy connections was urged primarily by the British because these men constituted a strong anti-British group. Later, in North Africa, when former Vichyites came forward as allies, the British Government accepted and even welcomed their support.

Admittedly, however, Catroux' military cabinet, headed for a time by Colonel Pierre de Chevigne, was the center of anti-British activity and sentiment.[2] While Catroux was absent from the Levant engaged in his negotiations with Giraud and in the politics of Carlton Gardens, control was exercised by this Military Cabinet, whose high-handed manner angered the British. The Commander of the British Ninth Army complained that Catroux either did not know what was going on in his administration and was poorly advised by it or was himself a slippery character.[3]

It should be conceded, however, that despite their conflict with the British, the Free French under Catroux' supervision were able to bring considerable order out of the chaos created by Vichy maladministration and to relieve the

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1. CID 23596-S.
2. Beirut Wire #486, 7 December 1941.
3. OSS 8483, 12 November 1942; L.794.

economic distress of the natives.[1] Measures were taken to alleviate the food shortage. An Office of Cereals, set up by Catroux, forbade further hoarding and speculation in wheat and undertook to increase agricultural production. Foods imported from the United States and Great Britain were distributed locally with the help of the French Army.

Much was done through a vast program of public works and national defense to reduce unemployment. Late in January 1942 Catroux created by decree the War Economic Office (Office Economique de Guerre) to adapt the country's production to war needs by advising private entrepreneurs and by taking over enterprises when necessary. Plans were made to improve the educational system, and new schools, including one under Moslem administration, were founded. Catroux also reorganized municipal services and civil administration.

These remedial measures, like those which Catroux had previously introduced in Indo-China, were determined not only by military and political necessity, but followed the general precedents in colonial policy that Lyautey had established in North Africa.

During 1941 and 1942, the personal feud between Spears and Catroux reached "scandalous proportions,"[2] providing the Axis with excellent material for propaganda purposes and necessitating several peace-making visits to Beirut by de Gaulle.[3] By July 1942, relations were so strained that a rupture was imminent. Catroux intimated he did not trust Spears and that he would leave Syria

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1. Entente au Levant, op. cit., p. 35; Egon Kaskeline in The Christian Science Monitor, 1 September 1942; Raoul Aglion, The Fighting French, op. cit., 228-9.
2. Beirut Wire, #135, 15 April 1943.
3. OSS #6351, #6377, 10 September 1942; CID #20785-S.

unless Spears did.[1]

At this point, de Gaulle made one of his periodic visits to Syria and threatened to evict the British forcibly if Spears were not removed.[2] Finally, mediation by Washington was necessary to avert the threatened clash between the two armed camps.[3] Although the rift was bridged the span was not permanent and by fall the situation was as bad as before. Only with the withdrawal of Catroux from the Levant to conclude negotiations between de Gaulle and Giraud and to become a member of the French Committee for National Liberation in Algiers did the situation become eased. There still remained dangerous eruptive forces beneath the surface.

The antagonism between Catroux and Spears was more than personal. It directly reflected a similar animosity and divergence of views between the chiefs of these two emissaries, Prime Minister Churchill and General de Gaulle. Their differences in turn mirrored traditional Anglo-French jealousy and conflicting colonial ambitions.

Catroux, extremely sensitive to real or imagined encroachments on French interests[4] held, like de Gaulle, that the Free French must make it their sacred obligation to maintain the rights of France all over the world.[5] In the reoccupation of the Levant States, Catroux saw the first step toward realization of his theory of "recourse to the Empire." By resorting to the resources of colonies under their control, the Free French could gradually reassemble the scattered remnants of the Empire and eventually recover metropolitan France itself.

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[1] OSS #5679, 7 August 1942.
[2] OSS #5742, 12 August 1942.
[3] OSS #5679, 7 August 1942; OSS #5657, 8 August 1942.
[4] Beirut Wire #135, 15 April 1943.
[5] Beirut Wire #139, 18 April 1943.

Spears, a personal friend of Churchill chosen specifically by the Prime Minister for the Levant position, had ideas about British interests in the Near East which were essentially in conflict with Catroux' aims. The Levant was of great strategic importance to the British and must therefore be kept free of aggression from without and disruption from within. Moreover, in the Arab world the British had committed themselves to a policy of appeasement and political self-determination. They knew only too well that there was nothing so contagious as Moslem disaffection.

The British and French Foreign Offices, anxious to preserve the appearance of Allied solidarity, were unwilling to air their differences at this time. Undoubtedly, they were only too happy to attribute the disagreement in the Levant to a personal quarrel.

The precise position of France and Great Britain in the Levant had been fixed originally in 1916 by the Sykes-Picot treaty which recognized the French sphere of influence in Syria and Lebanon. Following the World War, this treaty was reaffirmed and further clarified by the Franco-British convention approved by the Mandate Conference at San Remo in 1920.[1] In accordance with Article 22 of the League Covenant concerning the government of territories "as yet unable to stand alone under the strenuous conditions of the modern world," the Council of the League on 24 July 1922 arbitrarily made France mandatory guide of Syria and Lebanon until they should be ready to govern themselves. Iraq, Palestine, and Trans-Jordan were similarly assigned to Great Britain as mandates.[1]

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[1] Entente au Levant, op cit., p. 13.

In an attempt to allay local disaffection and in partial fulfillment of the complete autonomy promised in mandate provisions, Lebanon was granted a democratic constitution in 1926 and Syria a similar constitution in 1930. Both were based on the principle of parliamentary cabinet government. When, in 1936, the liberal Socialist government of León Blum came into power, steps were taken to grant Syria and Lebanon an independence similar to that which Britain had given Iraq in 1931.

Treaties of friendship and alliance were drawn up with Lebanon in November of 1936 and with Syria in December of the same year. Lebanon had been separated from Syria as an administrative unit since 1920. By these treaties, Syria and Lebanon were recognized as independent and sovereign states and were to be admitted to the League as full members within three years. The treaties also provided that an alliance based on perpetual peace and friendship should be established between the contracting parties, that they should consult each other on all matters pertaining to relations with foreign countries affecting their common interests, and that France was to be permitted to maintain naval bases and air fields in the two Levant countries. Although both Syria and Lebanon immediately accepted the treaties, they were never ratified by the French Parliament. As an established precedent of French policy and the basis for present French terms, the treaties became an important factor in recent negotiations between France and the governments of the two states.

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[1] This and following based on R & A Report No. 1063, (Near East), R & A Report No. 1304 (Near East), The New York Times, 22 June 1941; Pour la Victoire, 18 November 1943.

Under the Daladier government and the Vichy regime, the slight degree of self-government which the Syrians and Lebanese enjoyed was sharply curtailed. When the British and Free French invaded the Levant to expel Vichy and check Nazi infiltration, they sought to make amends for this neglect and obtain a welcome reception from the native inhabitants. On 8 June 1941 Catroux announced to the peoples of Lebanon and Syria that he had come to put an end to the mandatory regime and to guarantee by treaty their sovereign and independent status as united or separate states.[1]

At the same time, Sir Miles Lampson, British Minister in Cairo, announced the British Government stood behind Catroux' pledge. Since this initial concurrence of views, the French and British have been at odds, not over the ultimate granting of independence to the Levant States, but over the time and means of implementing this independence. Details had not been settled in the original understanding, and an agreement on them has since been made increasingly difficult, if not impossible, by the barrier of mutual distrust which has grown up between them.

In his letter of 24 June 1941 to General Catroux, appointing him Delegate General of the Levant and defining his duties, the Free French leader had stressed the necessity of negotiating treaties that would establish the independence and sovereignty of the Levant States and at the same time perpetuate their alliance with France.[2] Feeling it is their sacred duty to safeguard French interests

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1. The Near East, op. cit., pp. 230-4.
2. Ibid., pp. 234-5.

throughout the world both de Gaulle and Catroux are anxious to preserve the Empire intact. De Gaulle's future standing with a majority of the French people in a liberated France may depend upon the success with which he discharges this responsibility. More and more occupied with political matters at Algiers and with the means of restoring a republican government in metropolitan France, de Gaulle relied upon Catroux to handle the colonial problem.

The British position on the other hand was presented in an address by Prime Minister Churchill to the House of Commons, on 9 September 1941. Churchill stated the British had no ambitions in Syria and recognized France's preeminence in the Levant insofar as any European power would enjoy special privileges in that area. On the other hand, he made it clear that France must relinquish her pre-war position in the mandated area, that Syria and Lebanon must be given back to their peoples, and that the process of creating independent Syrian and Lebanese governments should not wait until the end of the war.[1]

On 16 September 1941, Catroux wrote a letter to Sheikh Taj-al-Din al-Hasani, former head of the Syrian State, acquainting him with the intentions of the Free French in agreement with the British and proposing that he accept the provisional Presidency of the Syrian Government.[2] On 23 November, in a similar offer to Alfred Naqqash, he asked him to continue to head the government of Lebanon as its President pro tem. The formal declarations[3] were issued by Catroux on 26 September and 26 November respectively, and on 28 October Great Britain recognized the independence of Syria.[1] According to these proclamations, Syria and Lebanon were to enjoy the rights and prerogatives of independent, sovereign states, subject only to the restrictions imposed by a state of war and the security of the country. In the interpretation of this qualifying condition is found the source of much misunderstanding between the French and British.

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[1] The Near East, op. cit., pp. 226-7.
[2] France, 26 November 1941.
[3] For the text of these proclamations see The Near East, op. cit., p. 227 ff.

Following these proclamations, de Gaulle informed the League of Nations that the two Levant States were now independent.[2] In spite of these promises, the French continued to postpone any practical implementation of the proclamations. To the British it seemed the French were stalling for time, while the Levant peoples began to doubt the French intended to make good their assurances.[3] Local discontent with French misrule grew daily and many Arabs turned to the British in the hope of gaining better conditions.[4] All sorts of legal arguments were offered by French authorities to explain the delay. One explanation was that the mandate still existed and could only be terminated after the war by formal action of the League,[1] another held the 1936 treaties should be revived as a basis for Franco-Levant relations.[2]

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[1] Secretary of State Cordell Hull clarified the position of the United States toward Syria and Lebanon in a statement released to the press on 29 November 1941, in which he said that the United States continued to support the convention between this country and France signed at Paris, 4 April 1924. The provisions of this convention clearly embodied the idea of Syrian and Lebanese independence. (The Near East, op. cit., p. 236.)

George Wadsworth was dispatched to Beirut as diplomatic representative of the United States. This was tantamount to a limited recognition restricted by war conditions. (OSS #7665, 28 October 1942; OSS #494, 27 November 1942.)

[2] For the text of de Gaulle's letter to the League see The Near East, op. cit., pp. 234-5. In this letter de Gaulle stated that Syrian and Lebanese independence was limited by the exigencies of the war. Furthermore, he stressed that this was a de facto recognition, pending legal dissolution of the mandate by a reconstituted League with the agreement of the United States and the conclusion of treaties between the French Government and the Governments of Syria and Lebanon. In the meantime, de Gaulle informed the League, General Catroux would continue to exercise the powers of High Commissioner.

[3] CID #23596-S.

[4] OSS Source B#A-11785, 20 June, 20 July 1943; OSS source B #A-11517, 2 August 1943; OSS Source B #A-11518, 2 August 1943.

Catroux, representing French interests, continued to hedge throughout 1942, although he constantly reiterated assurances of eventual independence for the Levant. On 15 March 1943 he took a firm, if fundamentally contradictory stand, when he wrote President Naqqash of Lebanon that "the mandate remains in force notwithstanding the independence proclamation of November 26, 1941."[3]

By reason of this continued vacillation and temporizing, Catroux, as spokesman for Free French colonial policy, has been accused of insincerity. Catroux' backtracking, however, can be attributed to pressure exerted by de Gaulle, who suspected the British of sponsoring Syrian and Lebanese independence to further their own designs and who wished to retreat to the pre-war status quo. The drift of events was unpropitious for the preservation of French prestige and power in the Levant.

The British became more insistent as de Gaulle proved more disinclined to fulfill promises of Levant independence at this time. On 18 March 1943, after consulting with de Gaulle in London, Catroux suddenly issued a decree providing for the return of a constitutional government in Lebanon as soon as a new president could be chosen by a Chamber of Deputies, which was to be elected freely in September 1943. In the meantime, Catroux, having asked for the resignations of the provisional President, Alfred Naqqash, and his cabinet, appointed Dr. Ayyub Tabit Chief of State. Naqqash had been an ardent Francophile, but Tabit was known to incline more to the cause of Lebanese freedom.

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[1] Cf. de Gaulle's letter to the Secretary-General of the League, footnote 2, supra.

[2] OSS #5742, 12 August 1942. Similarly, Catroux stated in a conversation with Riyad al-Sulh, Lebanese Prime Minister, that France's relations with Lebanon were based on the 1936 Treaty. (OSS #7874, 9 March 1943.)

[3] OSS #15789, 17 March 1943.

On 25 March, Catroux decreed that the Syrian constitution would likewise be revised after similar elections. 'Ata Bey al-Ayubbi, who had succeeded Taj-al-Din al-Hasani as provisional President of Syria on the latter's death, was retained and made head of the Syrian Republic. Ayubbi also was a compromise choice.

The return to the constitutions and the substitution of acceptable leaders as chiefs of the two transitional governments represented a concession to the importunate demands of Arab nationalists and to British pressure. Actually, any goodwill that might have been engendered by these gestures was minimized by the overbearing manner with which they were made and by the retention of supreme authority by the Free French Delegate General.

The British were determined by this time to force the hand of the French. After repeated delays caused as much by political maneuvering of British and French authorities as by deliberate efforts of the French to procrastinate, the elections were finally scheduled for July in Syria and for August in Lebanon. The elections were the occasion for an unofficial contest between the British and French to control the votes and hence the future Parliaments. Arab groups in Syria, which had formerly looked to the Nazis for deliverance, but which after the Allied occupation had transferred their allegiance to the British, received open encouragement from the British, whose aim appeared to be promotion of the Pan-Arab movement in the entire Near and Middle East.[1]

Catroux, observing that the British were cultivating the Arab National Bloc, attempted to appease the Moslems and reach an understanding with Shukri al-Quwwatli, nationalist aspirant to the Presidency, whereby the French would endorse his party in return for his guarantee of a new treaty.[2] At first, it seemed that Quawwatli would be willing to negotiate with Catroux.[3] After the nationalist position had been strengthened by an overwhelming victory in the subsequent elections, however, Quwwatli's own party, the National Bloc, refused to consider the proposition.[4] The nationalists contended they could not negotiate with a group that inadequately represented France.[5] The French who had used this argument before found that they had been caught in their own legal trap.

In Lebanon, where the juxtaposition of rival Christian and Moslem factions presented religious as well as political issues, the mosaic was even more intricate. In an attempt to entice the Arab Moslem away from British influence, Catroux withdrew traditional French support of the Maronite Christian majority.

A crisis broke on 17 June over the number of seats in the new Parliament and the division of these seats between the Maronites and the Moslems. At the advice of Catroux and Nahhas Pasha, Premier of Egypt, a compromise was managed

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1. OSS Source B #A-11785, 20 June 1943.
2. Secret Source, 26 May 1943.
3. Secret Source, 12 July 1943; Secret Source, 27 June 1943; Secret Source, 26 July 1943.
4. OSS #8624, 17 July 1943.
5. OSS #13789, 17 March 1943.

by Jean Helleu, Catroux' successor, whereby there would be twenty-nine Christian Deputies and twenty-five Moslems, a gain for the latter.[1]

Dr. Tabit, a Christian opposed to this increase in Moslem representation, resigned under French pressure. In his place, Petro Tarrad, a Greek Orthodox, and as such not averse to the inclusion of Lebanon in a greater Syria, was appointed to head a new provisional government with the assistance of a Moslem Secretary of State and a Maronite Assistant Secretary.[2] Catroux was immediately accused by Dr. Tabit of betraying Christian interests and lending his support to the Moslems in order to win British approval and eventually to succeed to the chairmanship of the Algiers Committee.[3]

In undertaking to play one native group off against another and to ensure the election of a pro-French group, the French failed to take into full account the growing nationalism of prominent natives and political astuteness of their leaders. In Syria, the National Bloc, although divided among themselves, succeeded in taking advantage of the rivalry between the French and the British by playing both ends against the middle. Quwwatli inclined more and more favorably to the British, however, as he became increasingly aware of the importance of British support and interdependence of all Arab states.[4]

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1. The New York Herald Tribune, 14 November 1943.
2. PW Roundup: Near East, #18, 20-27 July, pp. 10-14.
3. PW Roundup: Near East, #19, 27 July-1 August 1943, pp. 10-12.
4. OSS source B #A-11517, 2 August 1943; OSS source B#A-11518, 2 August 1943,
   In discussing the difficulties of the French and British in Syria and Palestine, Catroux observed: "These difficulties would not have occurred except that the policies of the French and British were opposed in the Levant and the inhabitants profited by this division." (Interview with Derek Patmore, The Christian Science Monitor, 24 November 1941.)

Nevertheless, as leader of the National Bloc, an independent and strong Syria, including Lebanon, was his immediate objective.

Ultimately, the elections took place with considerably less interference by British and French authorities and with more order than was anticipated. The results of the elections showed a striking nationalist victory in both countries.[1] Quwwatli was elected President of Syria, while in Lebanon a coalition government was formed comprising both Maronites and Moslems. The Lebanese President, Bisharah al-Khuri, was a Maronite, while the Premier, Riyad al-Sulh, was a Moslem. Both were fervent nationalists and hence anti-French. Possessing freely elected and officially recognized governments of their own, the native Syrians and Lebanese had the bit in their teeth. Nothing but the exigencies of war and an overestimated sentimental attachment to France, slim reins indeed, remained to prevent them from running away completely.

IV. CATROUX AS DIPLOMATIC MEDIATOR IN FRENCH POLITICS

Upon the invasion of North Africa by British and American troops on 8 November 1942, Catroux broadcast an appeal from Beirut to all North African natives asking them to assist the Allies. The political confusion resulting from the invasion provided Catroux with a new role, the most highly publicized and perhaps the most successful of his entire career.

As diplomatic mediator for de Gaulle and as an agent in the successful establishment of the National Committee and the elimination from power in North Africa of Vichy

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1. OSS Source B #A-119157, 24 September 1943; PW Roundup: Near East, No. 25, 3-6 September 1943, pp. 10-11.

collaborators, Catroux has performed an inestimable service to French unity and understanding with the Allies. On 13 November, Admiral Darlan, with the approval of the Allied commander in chief, assumed civil control of French Africa and at the same time make Giraud head of the French military forces. Shortly after this de Gaulle summoned Catroux to London to report on the Levant and to join the conferences of the National Committee on the situation in North Africa.

Although Catroux had been suspicious of Darlan from the outset, he had accepted at first the contention of President Roosevelt and General Eisenhower that expediency demanded Darlan's presence.[1] When it became apparent that Darlan was not only going to remain High Commissioner of North Africa but intended to continue his allegiance to Marshal Pétain, Catroux advised his immediate expulsion from Allied war strategy. He was outspoken in his condemnation of Darlan, denouncing his grab for power as rank opportunism. "I should not like to be fighting with Darlan at my back,"[2] Catroux declared.

Although Catroux was to become noted as an adjuster of French differences, he persevered in his refusal to countenance any dealings, however indirect, with Vichy. The assassination of Darlan on 24 December 1942 relieved this deadlock and averted a crisis. A few days later, the Imperial Council, which had been formed by Darlan, selected Giraud to succeed him as High Commissioner. Catroux did not believe Giraud had been compromised by his association with Darlan or the Germans,[3] but many Free French and Resistance Groups have not shared this sentiment. As a conservative militarist and a potential rival of de Gaulle endorsed by the Allies, Giraud was only slightly more acceptable to the Free French than Darlan. Because Catroux was motivated only by a sincere wish to expedite the restoration of the French republic and not by personal ambition or political loyalty, Catroux could in all sincerity undertake to bring about a union of the two factions.

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[1] *The New York Times*, 12 July 1943.
[2] *Ibid.*, 8 December 1942; *Time*, 14 December 1942.
[3] *Current Biography*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

On 27 January 1943, the day following the meeting of de Gaulle and Giraud with Allied leaders at Casablanca, an Algiers communiqué announced that it had been "decided to establish, from now on, a permanent liaison" between the National Committee and the North African government. Early in February Catroux was officially chosen to head the Free French mission to North Africa. A week later he arrived in Algiers to make the first Free French contact with Giraud since Casablanca and to lay the groundwork for the rest of the mission that was to follow. Eventually, on 19 February he became permanent liaison officer and gave notice that henceforth he would be alternately in Algiers and Beirut.

As soon as his name became linked with the negotiations proceeding between de Gaulle and Giraud, Catroux was frequently mentioned as a possible successor to General Bergeret, Deputy High Commissioner under Darlan and Giraud, or to General Noguès, Vichy-tainted Resident General of Morocco.[1] When Giraud assumed the title of "French civil and military commander in chief" and set up a War Committee without consulting the Free French, de Gaullists in London disclaimed reports that Catroux would accept any post under Giraud.[2]

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[1] Current Biography, op. cit., p. 15.

[2] The Christian Science Monitor, 9 February 1943.

Later, as Giraud began to capitulate to Free French demands, there was considerable talk from Vichy and Paris of Catroux replacing him.[1] According to a recent German rumor, Catroux is being considered by the Allies as a successor to de Gaulle.[2] For the most part, these reports of Catroux' political ambitions and potentialities have come from Syrian nationalist sources[3] or have been of Axis and Vichy France inspiration.[4] They have been aimed primarily at instigating dissension among non-collaborationist French ranks.

Vichy and Axis propaganda have also made much of the fact that Catroux' wife is Jewish and assert that she has influenced him to adopt a pro-Jewish bias toward affairs in the Near East.[5] The common knowledge that she is a self-seeking and politically ambitious woman has lent credence to the widely circulated reports of Catroux' aspirations to political power. She is the former Marguerite Jacob of Paris and her brother is alleged to have been connected with banking interests in France. Many of the Free French resented Mme. Catroux as they did not want their uncertain future further jeopardized by the intrusion of political ambitions dictated by monarchists or militaristic interests.[6]

Catroux is a man of considerable personal integrity and independence and unless unbiased reports can be found to substantiate the above aspersions little value can be assigned to them.

Since Catroux acted merely as head of the de Gaulle

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1. Le Matin, 5 March 1943.
2. Radio Paris, 15 December 1943.
3. L 7877; OSS #20255, 23 July 1943.
4. VCCW, A 154, 9 September 1943; Le Matin, 5 March 1943; Jean Demase, Ici Paris, (Paris, 1942), pp. 11-19.
5. Interview, Fall or Winter 1941-2, Western European Files.
6. CID #23596 S.

mission and not as ambassador plenipotentiary in the negotiations with Giraud, his power was limited to presenting the terms of the National Committee. He is to be credited with accepting the subordinate role of selling de Gaullism in its most moderate form.[1] Since he is less extreme in his views and more diplomatic in manner than de Gaulle, Allied and French military officials have preferred to deal with him rather than with his more intractable chief. This acceptability has frequently placed Catroux in a key position in both French national and international affairs.

Catroux on 23 February 1943 acquainted Giraud with the minimum demands of the Fighting French. These conditions were the rejection of the armistice of June 1940, the elimination of men who symbolized capitulation and collaboration, a return to the laws of the Third Republic, and the restoration of traditional French liberties. Giraud, who up to this point had continued to pay lip service to Pétain, was persuaded by Catroux to accept these terms in general, and on 7 March repudiated all the laws passed by Vichy.

The elimination of Vichy elements from official and military positions, which no one urged more strongly than Catroux,[2] came more slowly. The first resignations were those of General Bergeret as Giraud's Deputy High Commissioner and Jean Rigaud as Secretary for Political Affairs. Catroux was doubtful about Giraud's appointment of Marcel Peyrouton to succeed Yves Chatel as Governor General of Algeria. Repeatedly he demanded the dismissal of Charles Noguès and Pierre Boisson as Resident General of Morocco and Governor

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1. Newsweek, 7 June 1943.
2. OSS #18399, 5 May 1943.

General of West Africa respectively.[1] He also condemned the continued toleration in North Africa of the Service d'Ordre Legionnaire and Jacques Doriot's Parti Populaire Français.[2] Eventually, Catroux' recommendations, which were more tactful and less forceful expressions of de Gaulle's own demands, were followed by Giraud, and the Free French saw the gradual elimination of men who symbolized collaboration. The purge and reorganization of the Army, however, came only after the formation of the Committee and de Gaulle's ascension by successive steps to complete control.

Late in March, Catroux had announced that Giraud and de Gaulle were nearly in agreement and that the situation was ripe for an actual meeting between the two men. It was his confident expectation that their forthcoming conversations could only end in success. Suddenly, on 5 April, General Eisenhower requested that de Gaulle postpone to a more opportune time his trip to Algiers scheduled for around 20 April.

From this point on, the negotiations between the two groups bogged down. The de Gaullists felt that Eisenhower's interference could only mean that they were being shelved. They also feared that the Giraudists were trying to win Catroux away from the Free French.[3] Although they had concurred on the initial necessity of clearing away the wreckage of Vichy administration in North Africa, they now disagreed on the form and personnel of the central authority that was to replace it.

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[1] Current Biography, op. cit., p. 15.

[2] The New York Times, 8 December 1942; The New York Post, 8 December 1942.

[3] Current Biography, op. cit., p. 15.

De Gaulle refused to accept Giraud's proposal for the creation of a council of colonial governors to be responsible for the direction of French affairs until free elections could be held. Nor would he consider Giraud's plan for the provisional administration of metropolitan France by military authority. On the contrary, de Gaulle insisted that in the new government military power should be subordinate to civil power and that this government should include representatives of the underground movement within France.[1] This was the impasse which Catroux found it necessary to resolve before a merger could be effected between the two parties.

Within the Free French movement itself there was one group, variously called the party of expediency, the moderates, and the center party, which urged an immediate agreement with Giraud in the interests of united military action and common representation of French interests with the Allies. Settlement of controversial political differences should, they felt, be set aside until later. This view was held by Catroux and supported by Massigli, General de Larminat, and most of the Free French military leaders. It struck these men that a compromise, however temporary, was preferable to a stalemate that only delayed French unification and jeopardized French prestige.[2]

A working agreement for which Catroux was chiefly responsible was eventually reached on 3 June 1943 in the establishment of the French Committee for National Liberation with de Gaulle and Giraud as co-chairmen. In recognition of his merits, Catroux was given the position of Commissioner for Coordination of Moslem affairs and hence became one of the original seven members of the Committee. Simultaneously he became Governor General of Algeria.

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1. The Christian Science Monitor, 15 April 1943.
2. Memorandum prepared in the US Naval Office, London, 20 May 1943.

V. CATROUX' CAREER SINCE THE FORMATION OF THE FRENCH COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

Although prior to the formation of the Committee Catroux had placed himself at de Gaulle's disposal, he differed from him both in personality and certain political objectives. He had never regarded the Free French movement as a crusade to be pursued with fanatical zeal, as de Gaulle obviously did. Consequently, he had not hesitated to oppose de Gaulle and support Giraud on several occasions and had even resigned temporarily from the National Committee after one personal clash.[1] Nevertheless, his tact and willingness to compromise, attributes lacking in de Gaulle, made him very useful to the Free French movement.

As a member of the National Committee, Catroux for some time remained a key link in the political organization. To maintain a balance of views and preserve harmony on the Committee, Catroux used his power judiciously. On most subjects concerning restoration of the Republic and the Empire his views have been moderate versions of those held by de Gaulle. Around Catroux gathered a group of moderates, the so-called "civilian center party," which was not a highly organized, powerful cabal but which frequently united to curb authoritative tendencies and to break deadlocks among the other members. Among these moderates were Jean Monnet, René Massigli, Henri Bonnet, and La Couve de Murville.

Catroux and the moderates were to play an important part in settling the controversy over the political power and reorganization of the Army.[2] A formula was worked out

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1. OSS #19511 5 June 1943.
2. The New York Times, 14 June 1943, France-Amérique, 9 January 1944.

whereby Giraud's command was to be limited to troops in the field while General Legentilhomme, newly created Commissioner for National Defense, would exercise over-all supervision of the French Army. By a series of such compromises, de Gaulle who remained firm for Army reform, finally succeeded in eliminating military authority altogether from the Committee, subordinating it to civil authority, and eventually ousting Giraud as co-chairman. As the handwriting on the wall became clear, the Giraudists grew apprehensive lest Catroux succeed Giraud as commander in chief of the French Army in North Africa.[1] This, like other reports of Catroux' ambitions, proved to be an unfounded rumor.

An interesting sidelight on the question of military versus civil authority was the disagreement between Giraud and Catroux over the arbitrary powers of martial law which Giraud had been exercising under the State of Siege law of 1849.[2] As Governor General of Algeria, Catroux had protested bitterly to the Committee against this defiance of his authority by Giraud's North African Army. By virtue of these powers, Giraud, although a member of the Committee, had been wielding arbitrary power outside of the Committee. Accordingly, the Committee transferred these powers to Catroux.

In North African politics Catroux has revealed very little of his personal political views. Until 1940 he was apparently a non-political soldier, as General Giraud purports to remain. In documents he is invariably called a "moderate" or "politique," but these terms lack substance.[3] He has also been labelled a "monarchist,", a term used rather loosely in French politics.[4] As a militarist and colonial official it

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1. *Newsweek*, 7 June 1943.
2. *The New York Times*, 23 June 1943.
3. *P W Weekly*, 4 June 1943; OSS Algiers, 12 June 1943, CD 19842.
4. Implied in CID 23596 (S); also used by *Time*.

is doubtful if Catroux could represent a liberal outlook, since it is reported he does not want to be associated with a policy appealing to the public for support.[1] He can best be described as a patriot of the right wing.

In the light of recent changes in the French Committee it is very unlikely that Catroux has any political future. As a high-ranking militarist closely associated with Giraud and a colonial official long immersed in the traditional conservatism he is not altogether personal grata with progressive elements that now control the Consultative Assembly and aspire to control the Commitee. Delegates of the Resistance groups to the Assembly are reported to be highly critical of him.[2]

In the past Catroux had proved very useful to de Gaulle in relations with Giraud and representatives of the Allied nations. With the elimination of Giraud as a political rival and the staunch backing of the resistance groups de Gaulle may have felt sufficiently strong to act independently without further reliance upon the support of the moderates and military centered in Catroux.

The reappointment of Catroux as Commissioner of State (i.e. Without Portfolio) seemed to confirm this. The word "Coordination" in Catroux' official title had possessed unfortunate implications both for the French and the Moslems. With the growing agitation for independence in the Levant, there was good reason to make a sharp distinction between Moslems in the Near East and the Moslems in French North Africa. Catroux' change in title may indicate that he has been shelved politically. On the other hand it may

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1. OSS #14811, 7 April 1943.
2. AFHQ, North Africa Survey #24, October 1943.

signify merely that he will concentrate henceforth on colonial and diplomatic affairs.

As Commissioner for Moslem Affairs and Governor General of Algeria, Catroux faced almost overwhelming odds. French relations with the natives in North Africa, although somewhat happier than those in the Levant, were still considerably strained. The Jews had been alienated by the abrogation of the Cremieux decree. Moslem disaffection, always latent, had increased with conditions long present but aggravated by the war. The Arabs had bitterly resented their exclusion from administrative offices under the Vichy régime. The failure of the French to alleviate the economic hardships and introduce reforms, especially after the invasion, created further unrest.[1]

Arab groups began to turn to other nations for deliverance. Prior to the invasion they had hoped to enlist the help of the Nazis. Afterwards, they looked in turn to the United States, Great Britain, and Russia for relief. Actually, however, there has been less danger of the North African Moslems transferring their allegiance to another nation than of their fomenting a nationalist revolution of their own. In Tunisia this movement has been quite active, but in Algeria and Morocco it has lacked the requisite organization and leadership to ensure its success. The majority of the Algerian Moslems still address their demands for reform to France.

Since the Committee took over North African administration and appointed Catroux its Commissioner for Moslem Affairs, it has adopted a policy of conciliating the North African natives, particularly the Moslems, by certain beneficial

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1. The Christian Science Monitor, 28 September 1943.

measures. On a motion by Catroux, the Moslem pilgrimages to Mecca were resumed and the Committee undertook to provide transportation by ship or truck.[1] Although only a few natives actually made the pilgrimage because available transportation facilities were limited by war needs, it is significant that the French made it possible for North African Moslems to be represented at the holy city for the first time in two years.

Catroux also requested the Committee for a credit estimated at one hundred and five million francs to indemnify Algerian civil servants dismissed on racial or political grounds by the Vichy government.[2] The Committee also authorized Catroux to appoint a commission to direct transport of foodstuffs from farms to cities. The Commission was empowered to requisition French army vehicles for this purpose.[3]

In addition, Catroux and other Commissioners made innumerable, extensive trips throughout North Africa to make a survey of conditions and to promote good relations with inhabitants.[4] Catroux gave detailed reports to the Committee on his findings. On the basis of such reports the Committee in one of its earliest meetings decided to introduce parity of salaries for natives, measures furthering Islamic culture, and participation of Moslems in the administration.[5] A new deal for Arabs has also been planned by French educational authorities and social service administrators, who envisage

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1. The New York Times, 25 August 1943.
2. The New York Times, 25 August 1943; see also France-Amérique, 9 January 1943, for later steps toward employment restitution.
3. The Christian Science Monitor, 15 October 1943.
4. La Dépêche Algérienne, 25 August 1943; L'Echo d'Alger, 18 September 1943.
5. FCCL, Radio France, 3 August 1943.

the expansion of native schools, the education of women, the division of large properties, and a general rise in the standard of living.[1]

Not until de Gaulle had maneuvered into a position where he could count on the support of a majority of the commissioners did he undertake to restore the Cremieux decree, which Giraud had revoked with Allied consent. On 21 October, during a meeting which Giraud did not attend, the Committee declared that the Cremieux provisions were once again in full force. The restoration of civil rights to Algerian Jews indicated that with the influx of liberal resistance elements, notably the Communists, into the Government a more progressive policy toward the natives might be expected.

Although Catroux has certainly not been distinguished for his liberal outlook vis-à-vis the colonies and has expressed his wish to see the Empire restored to its pre-war _status quo_, it is a promising augury that he accepted this measure, especially as some of the strongest opposition to it came from members of his own staff.[2] He did request, however, that some provision be made for a public announcement which might relieve the Moslems of any anxiety that the French were favoring the Jews.[3] Such concern ties in with the recent pro-Moslem policy of the French in Lebanon and Syria.

This reassurance has been confirmed by de Gaulle's announcement at Constantine on 12 December that the Committee had decided to grant full rights of French citizenship to qualified Moslems in Algeria. This is a significant concession.

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[1] The _Washington Post_, 30 April 1943.
[2] The _New York Times_, 22 October 1943.
[3] OSS #23816, 21 October 1943.

Educational qualifications will be maintained but the enfranchised Moslems will not be required to forfeit their Moslem status or abandon polygamy as was formerly necessary. Although a negligible minority of the six million Algerian Moslems will be immediately affected by this measure, the French government has taken this important step in an attempt to point the way toward complete assimilation of North African natives and to counteract such growing nationalist activity as has gotten out of hand in the Levant. Catroux hailed this move as a sign that France has returned to its national policy of liberty, equality, and fraternity.[1]

The failure of the Committee to give even more immediate attention to the crying need for reform arises from the trying circumstances under which it has had to function. The uncertainty of its international position, internal conflict, the lack of necessary funds and administrative machinery, all have contributed to delay the introduction of progressive measures. Moreover, the Committee, anxious to preserve the Empire intact in order to strengthen the cause of French liberation and fill its depleted coffers, has hesitated to inaugurate any radical departure from French colonial policy. It has nevertheless seen the advisability of making certain concessions and promises.

The danger lies in the tendency of the present administration, hypersensitive to a painful degree and resentful of foreign interference or local intransigeance, to assert itself by resorting to high-handed power politics. On the other hand, if the Committee is to restore a measure of order, it must make clear to all parties its authority in matters subject to its jurisdiction. It already shows signs of reverting to Lyautey's policy of tempering firmness with concession and justice.

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[1] L'Echo d'Alger, 15 December 1943.

An instance of Catroux' application of this policy is found in his handling of a minor crisis in Algeria. The Committee had decided that Algeria should contribute an additional five million dollars to the French budget. When the Arab delegation to the Algiers Financial Council refused on 22 September to agree to this tax on the grounds that it was "not their war," Catroux, as Governor General, dissolved the native section of the financial delegation and ordered the arrest of its two leaders.

This demonstration of insurgence was interpreted by the French as an attempt to instigate a tax strike against French administration and therefore to sabotage the Allied war effort. Catroux was severely criticized for his action by Algerian Communists, augmented by former Communist members of the French Chamber of Deputies. They accused him of fomenting dissatisfaction that provoked all of the former native members of the Consultative Assembly to boycott its meeting.[1]

Catroux and the Committee weathered the crisis, and on 17 October Catroux announced the reconstruction of the delegation and the release of the two arrested members. This action followed a declaration by the deposed Arab delegates affirming their fidelity to France, and their willingness to cooperate in the war effort. At the same time, the delegation expressed a desire that political, economic, and social reforms sought by the Arabs should be achieved in an orderly, legal manner within the French community.[2]

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1. The New York Times, 26 September 1943.
2. OSS #1792, 18 October 1943.

In a speech delivered 7 December, Catroux explained the intention of the French administration to use the financial and material resources of the colonies in financing its war activities. In return, he promised amelioration of Moslem conditions and "the return to French traditions of liberty and enlightened democracy, of social discipline and mutual comprehension."[1] This recalls the benevolent paternalism of Lyautey and his disciples, a bewhiskered attitude and policy which the Moslems, who have grown in political stature, may regard with some skepticism. By his arbitrary action in this incident and by recent evidences of opposition on his part to the formation of an Arab federation, Catroux would seem to have alienated the native Algerian intellectuals. Because they believe Catroux to be biased against the Moslems and know him to view Algeria as "a projection of France," they have little confidence in his regarding their plans with favor. For this reason, they resented his intrusion in the Lebanese crisis.[2] Although such articulate exponents of Arab unity represent only a small minority of the native Algerian population, the French have become apprehensive and have taken measures to counteract an Algerian nationalist movement by granting the natives larger representation in the local French administration.

In Lebanon, where the relations between native inhabitants and French possess far more serious implications, a bungling attempt to employ the same methods used by Catroux precipitated a major crisis. Since this "incident" demonstrated urgent need for immediate adoption by the French of a liberal colonial policy, it deserves a reasonably close examination. It also reveals the deft hand of Catroux once again pulling French chestnuts out of the fire.

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[1] France-Amérique, 19 September 1943.

[2] Report from a reliable source; Situation Report: Africa, 1 January 1944.

Given the particular parties involved and their conflicting interests, it was inevitable that a "test case" should arise sooner or later in the Levant. Nevertheless, the French were caught completely off guard. They could not have anticipated its occurring so soon after the elections and they certainly did not expect to face the showdown in Lebanon, where traditionally their position was the strongest.

The crisis came about as the immediate result of demands made on the French administration by the recently elected Lebanese government. Certain of its own new strength, and mindful of France's weak position, the nationalist government of President Bisharah al-Khuri and Premier Riyad al-Sulh was determined not to let the iron cool.

They presented the following demands: (1) transfer to local government of the administration of the controversial "common interests" -- customs, patents, and other sources of revenue which the French regarded as vital to their war effort; (2) dismantling of French administration and transfer of its personnel to posts as advisers to the local governments; (3) the substitution of a diplomatic staff for the French delegation, and (4) modification or annulment of constitutional provisions giving governmental powers to the French.[1] Concurrently, by way of indicating the alternative, constitutional amendments were introduced which would virtually terminate French privileges under the mandate.[2] The Lebanese cards were on the table. It now remained to see what the French held in their hand.

Helleu agreed to go to Algiers and consult the Committee of National Liberation. It was understood that during his absence the Lebanese government would not force matters.[1] On 5 November the French published a communique stating that a unilateral renunciation of France's rights under the mandate would be a contravention of international law and that French consent would be necessary first. The communique also reiterated the intention of the French to achieve Lebanese independence, but in such a way as to protect France's century-old rights in the Levant as well as her current strategic position and that of her allies.[2] The French clearly considered the mandate still in effect.

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[1] OSS #24291, 30 October 1943.
[2] OSS #24677, 9 November 1943.

The Lebanese government, considering this unfavorable action as an automatic termination of its agreement with Helleu, on 8 November rejected the French arguments and passed the amendments with an overwhelming majority.[3] French authorities immediately clamped a strict censorship on the Lebanese press;[4] and on 11 November Helleu issued decrees suspending the Lebanese constitution, dissolving the native Parliament, and arresting its leaders.[5] Emile Eddé, well-known for his pro-French sympathies, was installed as Chief of State. Strikes and rioting broke out, and there were several clashes between Senegalese troops and the local population, resulting in numerous native casualties.

The Lebanese had acted with the knowledge that they had the full backing of the Syrian Government[6] and they were reasonably certain of support from the rest of the Arab world, Great Britain, and the United States. Their confidence was

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1. OSS #24291, 30 October 1943.
2. Idem.
3. OSS #24574, 5 November 1943; OSS Beirut, 24717, 9 November 1943.
4. OSS #24674, 10 November 1943.
5. OSS #9266, 11 November 1943; OSS #24713, 11 November 1943.
6. OSS #24717, 9 November 1943.

not unfounded. The British government immediately filed a strong protest with the Committee and on 15 November the United States followed suit. Arab leaders and the Arab press howled in protest, and Nahhas Pasha urged Britain and the United States to take instant action against the French.

In Algiers, de Gaulle argued the mandate was still binding and would not be relinquished until a favorable treaty was obtained, the Lebanese action was a contravention of international law,[1] and the affair was in reality only an "incident" which the French and the Lebanese could settle between themselves.[2]

In Beirut, the Lebanese that held the mandate no longer existed, that a treaty was now impossible as the Committee did not have the authority to ratify it, and that the provisions of the constitution allowed its amendment by a legally constituted Parliament.[3] Lebanese arguments were unfounded since presumably, if the Committee was authorized to restore the suspended constitution, it was authorized to make a treaty.

For their part, the British maintained their declaration with Catroux on the eve of the joint invasion of the Levant and the Atlantic Charter obligated them to guarantee Lebanese independence. The Moslems likewise held that the French action was a breach of these pacts and of promises made to small nations at the Moscow Conference.

Such attempts at justification on legal grounds only obscured the real issues that underlay the situation. The French continued to distrust British motives and regarded the interference of the London Foreign Office as verification of British imperialist designs in the Levant. In an interview with the United States Minister, George Wadsworth, Helleu stated that the British hoped to usurp the privileged position of the French in the Levant and that by Eden's and Churchill's own admissions British policy in the Levant was determined in London.[1] It was reported by an observer that Helleu also remarked this was a test case which would demonstrate whether the United Nations intended to restore an Imperial France.[2] There is no reason to believe that these statements do not represent the unofficial views of de Gaulle as well.

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[1] OSS #25059, 23 November 1943.
[2] Courrier du Pacifique, 26 November 1943.
[3] OSS #24291, 30 October 1943; OSS 24574, 5 November 1943.

The British, on the other hand, had committed themselves to a policy of self-determination for all Moslem peoples and feared a general Arab revolt as a consequence of French repressive action in Lebanon. Moreover, they had reasons, other than altruistic ones, to support the Lebanese cause and hasten its inclusion in a British-sponsored Arab Union. The Moslems also hoped to further federation plans which had been interrupted by the crisis.

This was the situation when General de Gaulle announced on 12 November that General Catroux, French Cincinnatus, was being dispatched to Beirut with full authority to take all measures necessary to restore the constitutional government of Lebanon within the mandatory framework.[3] En route to Beirut, Catroux conferred with Richard Casey, British Minister to the Middle East, who had just come from the scene of action. Casey is reported to have said that with Catroux' permission he could clear up the situation in forty-eight hours.[4] When the British terms were made known, however, it was clear that Catroux would not accept them without a struggle.

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[1] OSS #24871, 11 November 1943.
[2] CID #49768, 13 November 1943.
[3] OSS #25061, 18 November 1943; La Dépêche Algérienne, 14 November 1943.
[4] OSS #24857, 14 November 1943.

The British demanded that the Lebanese leaders be reinstated and the status quo restored by 10 a.m., 22 November. A subsequent conference to be held in London under British supervision for the purpose of ironing out remaining wrinkles was proposed. If this ultimatum was not accepted, the British threatened to declare martial law.[1] They were reluctant to resort to intervention by the Ninth Army, however, if it could be avoided.[2]

To learn the lay of the land, Catroux shortly after his arrival in Beirut on 16 November had preliminary conferences with his old antagonist, Sir Edward Spears, British Minister to the Levant, and with the Maronite Patriarch. Although their conversation was "friendly," Catroux and Spears as usual got nowhere. The British Minister told Catroux he was apparently determined to do anything to preserve French prestige and that if the French did not live up to their promises their position in the Levant would be ruined.[3] Spears refused to negotiate with Catroux until the arrested leaders had been released.

Apparently Catroux was not alone in his dislike of General Spears.[4] General Holmes, in command of the British Ninth Army, was reported to have said it was Spears who was jeopardizing the British war effort in the Levant region and that he was exaggerating events and dangers in the hope of driving the French out of the area altogether.[5]

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[1] OSS #25123, 20 November 1943.
[2] OSS #24674, 10 November 1943.
[3] OSS #25107, 18 November 1943.
[4] A well-circulated jingle testifies to Spear's universal reputation for arrogance and obstinacy:

> Ride a cock horse to the Syrian cross
> To see a fine general ride his high horse.
> Spears on his fingers and spears on his toes
> He shall make trouble wherever he goes.

(Walter Lippmann in The New York Herald Tribune, 15 Nov. 1943.)

[5] OSS #25260, 22 November 1943.

Catroux' interview with the Maronite Patriarch was even more illuminating. The French delegate was informed that the Patriarch supported the arrested officials and that he wanted a free, separate Lebanon, unattached to any Arab federation.[1] Up to this point, Catroux may have hoped to divide Lebanese opinion along religious lines and win the support of the Maronite Christians.

When it became evident that they were standing alone and that they were not even in a position to win a compromise, the French began to back water. Catroux ultimately realized the most he could hope to accomplish would be to retreat gracefully and save France from utter humiliation.

On 19 November the Committee of National Liberation endorsed Catroux' long report, recognizing British interests throughout the Arab world and stressing the need for a quick agreement with their Allies. At the same time, while waiting to see Casey, Catroux in a press conference roundly criticized the attitude evinced by the British in the Levant. For the record, he stated his fears that Britain was confusing the issue by overstepping her authority in military matters and invading the province of politics reserved for the French. Any differences between the French and Lebanese could be settled by mutual concession, he maintained. "I want nothing better than to behave as a good ally and cooperate with the British," Catroux affirmed, "but as a Frenchman I must see to the interest of my country."[2]

On 21 November he received instructions from his chief in Algiers to settle the Lebanese affair at once, to reinstate al-Khuri, to release but not to reinstate the Ministers, and as soon as the dust settled to publicize the decision

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1. OSS #25052, 19 November 1943; OSS Beirut 24902, 13 Nov. 1943.
2. OSS #25123, 20 November 1943; The New York Times, 20 November 1943.

of the Committee to recall Helleu.[1] These measures were accordingly carried out. Spears informed Catroux that these concessions were insufficient. Catroux diplomatically agreed that Lebanon should be granted legal and theoretical title to independence, that France should have played ball, and added that Helleu had acted stupidly.[2] Had he been present, Catroux asserted, he would have issued a decree declaring the constitutional amendments void and negotiating for a solution of the resulting impasse.

The French action had been illegal, Catroux said, and added that even before the British ultimatum he had determined to rectify the error. Nevertheless, Catroux did not believe that de Gaulle would accept full British terms on the grounds that they were harsh and humiliating, but hoped some sort of compromise could be arranged, so that he could settle the matter locally.

For a short time it was uncertain just what would be done about the reinstatement of Riyad al-Sulh and the other ministers. The stalemate did not last long. After it became clear that the Lebanese would not accept a compromise, the Committee on 22 November agreed with Catroux that Riyad al-Sulh's cabinet should be returned to office. On the same day, Yves Chataigneau, who had been appointed to succeed Helleu, announced the reinstatement of the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies, the cancellation of Eddé's appointment, and the restoration of the constitution.

Catroux conferred at the same time with President al-Khuri and Prime Minister al-Sulh, and addressed the re-assembled Chamber of Deputies, expressing his regret for the incident and attributing full blame to Helleu, who had become the scapegoat.[1] Although the British ultimatum had been extended forty-eight hours, the French reluctantly accepted all of its terms by the original date of expiration.

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[1] OSS #25154, 21 November 1943.
[2] OSS #25260, 22 November 1943.

By way of putting a period to the entire affair, Catroux on 24 November proclaimed to the Lebanese: "Now France has restored what has been undone. She remains faithful to her promises, engagements, and obligations. Have confidence in her therefore to respect your rights and liberties as she has confidence in you to respect all that constitutes in your land her patrimony and situation."[2] This was wishful thinking. Although Catroux, with masterful diplomacy had been able to save French face and was hailed on all sides by Eden, al-Sulh, Nahhas Pasha, and others, the position of France in the Near East, if not throughout the Moslem world, had been irreparably damaged. She had been forced to retreat and for the time being was on the defensive.

The Syrian Government now followed the precedent established by Lebanon. On 30 November, the Chamber of Deputies in Damascus voted to rid the Constitution of Article 116, which gave the French High Commissioner the right to veto legislation. At the same time, Premier al-Sulh of Lebanon declared that in the forthcoming negotiations with the Committee Lebanon would negotiate on a basis of complete sovereignty. Thus, it was clear the Lebanese Government considered the disputed amendments to the Constitution a "fait accompli." The French, on their part, had not conceded the legality of the amendments and had explicitly upheld the part of Helleu's decree voiding them.

On 15 December Catroux, who had returned to Algiers after preliminary talks with Syrian leaders, left for Damascus

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1. OSS #25260, 22 November 1943.
2. "Comitè al'Information Algiers," 30 November 1943.

to negotiate an agreement with the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. On 23 December this agreement was reached. It was decided that the "common interests" which Lebanon and Syria had agreed to share on an equal basis, reserving twenty percent of the total for a common fund, would be transferred as of 1 January 1944 to the local governments with the proviso that the manner of transfer would be the object of later agreements.

Thus France ceded the direction of the Sûreté, passports, tribal affairs, dangerous foreigners, and frontier control to the governments of Syria and Lebanon. These agreements did not take the form of a treaty, but were proclaimed over the joint signatures of the negotiators. The refusal of the native governments to recognize the committee by negotiating international treaties is thus circumvented. Discussions are to be held later over the creation of a Syrian Army.

The concessions received universal acclaim in Syria. On 28 December Catroux returned to Algiers to negotiate the details of the transfer. The full implementation of Syrian and Lebanese independence, which the administration in Algiers is no longer able to postpone, promises to be effected without further delay or difficulty. It is certainly to be hoped that the French will not permit French prestige to be further damaged by continued temporizing.

France will presumably retain certain cultural and financial interests in the Levant, but French hegemony will have virtually ceased to exist. In Syria and Lebanon Catroux salvaged as much of French power as he could with the outmoded tools with which he was working. But Catroux represents an imperialistic, patronal outlook that will not survive the present war if any faith is to be placed in the pronouncements of the Allied leaders. French influence in the Near East can be restored only by a new, vital France returning not to the "old republican traditions," which such conservatives as Catroux recall wistfully and hopefully but by adopting a new, liberal policy that will command the respect and confidence of all Moslems. Since the Moslems are not to be put off any longer, it would be extremely dangerous for the French to delay further the adoption of a new approach to Moslem affairs.

VI. CONCLUSION

Catroux is a traditionalist who hopes to find in the Fourth Republic "un climat nouveau qui répond aux traditions de la France républicaine."[1] He is not altogether blind, however, to certain liberal progressive trends which he thinks should be braked but not halted. Believing the balance of the established order should be accomplished within the traditional framework, Catroux advocates progress by gradual evolution rather than radical change. In actual practice he relies upon the judicious use of concession and compromise to preserve this order.

Catroux' traditionalism can be seen in his position on most subjects. In politics, he has pursued a middle-of-the-road policy and has been associated with the former center or moderate group, which with the changing complexion of the French administration will probably become the right. Because of his well-known conservatism Catroux has been severely criticized by the Communist delegates to the Consultative Assembly and cannot have the unqualified approval of the underground.

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[1] France-Amérique, 19 December 1943.

Since he is a fierce patriot, however, Catroux has remained firm in his insistence on the elimination of all Vichy contaminated elements in the French government abroad and at home.

That Catroux continues to enjoy de Gaulle's confidence is evident from the responsible mission to which he was assigned during the Lebanon affair. He had, apparently, been dropped from the political scene or put on the shelf as de Gaulle found him more of a liability than an asset with liberal elements making a bid for control. Restored to his original role as a diplomat and mediator, Catroux in the Lebanon crisis once again performed an invaluable service to French unity.

In regard to the colonies Catroux has not altered his imperialistic outlook. In post-war France he envisages a realization of the old dream of an Empire, in which the colonies would serve the interests of metropolitan France and eventually become absorbed by it. On the other hand he is enough of an opportunist and advocate of compromise to be willing to sacrifice the letter of French hegemony in the colonies to preserve the spirit. He proposes a gradual non-revolutionary improvement of conditions, leading toward economic and cultural assimilation rather than separation.

In conclusion Catroux has been of vast help in smoothing the way to French unity, and may still prove useful in untangling snarls. French politics, however, have now progressed far beyond the relatively simple dichotomy of the de Gaulle-Giraud controversy. Since then, many more personalities and issues have become involved, and it is doubtful if Catroux could sponsor a compromise that would be acceptable now. As a conservative with only moderately liberal tendencies, Catroux represents a minority of articulate opinion in metropolitan France. The political signposts are already pointing to a new form of socialized government in post-war France, and Catroux, in returning to the moribund traditions of the Third Republic, is walking in the wrong direction.

APPENDIX

A Chronological Table of Principal Positions Held by Catroux

1899: graduated from St. Cyr at the age of 20, commissioned a sub-lieutenant, and posted to the Foreign Legion in North Africa.

1903-5: served as aide-de-camp to Governor General Beau of Indo-China.

1905-11: saw service in Morocco as aid to Colonel Lyautey and General d'Amade.

1911-13: served in Algeria as aide-de-camp to Governor General Lutaud.

1914-16: fought on the Western Front as an infantry officer in the *Tirailleurs Algériens*; wounded, decorated, and captured.

1916-18: held in the German war prison at Magdeburg.

1918: appointed military attaché at Constantinople with the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

1919-23: sent to Beirut under General Gouraud, first French high commissioner; appointed Governor of Damascus by Gouraud and retained in this post by General Weygand during the Druze campaign.

1923: recalled to Morocco by Marshal Lyautey to direct the Intelligence Bureau (G-2) during the Riff campaign.

1926: back in Syria as full colonel commanding the Second Bureau (G-2) of the Army in the Levant, serving under MM. de Jouvenel and Ponsot, successive high commissioners.

1928: for a short period served as commanding colonel of the First Regiment of the Foreign Legion at Sidi-be-Abbès in Algeria; shortly after, assumed Lyautey's former World War command at Ain-Sefra.

1929: attended the Center for High Military Studies, known as the "School for Marshals," in Paris; promoted to the rank of brigadier-general and given the command of the Marrakesh district in Morocco.

1934: with Giraud, completed the pacification of the Anti-Atlas region in Morocco; decorated *Grand Officer* of the *Légion d'Honneur* and elevated to the rank of lieutenant-general.

1936: recalled to France and given the command of the Fourteenth Infantry Division in Mulhausen which he held until early 1939.

1939: transferred to the command of the Nineteenth Army Corps in Algiers; a few months before the war, relieved of his command by General Gamelin and placed on the retired list.

1939, August: recalled to service by Georges Mandel, made a full general, and sent to Indo-China as Acting Governor-General.

1940, June: relieved of his post by the Vichy Minister for Colonies and replaced by Admiral Decoux.

1940, September: joined de Gaulle in London, became a member of the Council of Defense of the French Empire.

1940, December: appointed Free French Delegate General and Commander in Chief of Free French forces in the Levant.

1941, 8 June: led Free French forces in joint invasion of Syria and Lebanon with the British.

1941, June--1943, February: as French Delegate General, directed administration of internal affairs in Syria and Lebanon.

1943, February: appointed official Free French liaison officer to Giraud.

1943, 3 June: made Commissioner for the Coordination of Moslem Affairs on the French Committee of National Liberation; at the same time, appointed Governor-General of Algeria to replace Marcel Peyrouton.

1943, 9 November: Catroux dropped as Commissioner for the Coordination of Moslem Affairs amd made Commissioner of State.

1943, 12 November: Catroux dispatched to Beirut by the FCNL to mediate in the Lebanese dispute.

1943, 23 December: Catroux negotiates agreement with Syrian and Lebanese interests to transfer the "common interests" to the governments of Syria and Lebanon.

1943, 28 December: Catroux returns to Algiers to settle with the FCNL the details of the transfer.